

Something Old, Something New ...

For our 2005 production, Synaesthetic returns to once more mine the psychological depths of *The Trial*. Co-directors Chris Nichols and Joy Leonard plan to revise and restage their 1999 adaptation, **ROT**, which firmly established the Company's predilection for using live video feeds.



Synaesthetic's 2005 production will be a re-visitation of Franz Kafka's fascinating and unfinished novel, *The Trial*. Some of you may recall our first treatment of this tale, a multimedia dream-play called **ROT** that premiered in April '99, with Margaret O'Sullivan taking a fantastic turn as the enigmatic Josef K. This is a piece to which we've considered returning for years now, and the time finally feels right. So back we go into Kafka's world of secret courts, sexual obsession, latent shame and inescapable punishment.

This new production will borrow from the first many of the things that worked well - including Margaret as K, a plethora of surveillance video feeds, and interwov-

"Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K. for without his having done anything wrong, he was arrested one fine morning. This had never happened before."

en scenes filtered through K's subjective experience. **ROT** was loosely structured as courtroom drama, with various witnesses testifying against K, whose crime was never specified. The ensemble actors moved fluidly from interrogator to witness and back again, heightening the sense of dream logic and paranoia.

Co-directors Nichols and Leonard plan to do some significant re-conceptualizing, adding characters and interludes, drawing on moments and images from the novel that hadn't been previously adapted, and expanding the ensemble. The company as a whole is excited by this opportunity to return to rich material and go deeper, and to realize the staging and design con-

cepts more fully in a piece that seems to be eerily relevant to the times we live in. Josef K is his own worst enemy, and *The Trial* is perhaps more personal, ultimately, than political. Yet the novel's atmosphere of unanswerable accusations and submission to the inexorable machinery of justice seem peculiarly prophetic. This year the NYCLU's Surveillance Camera Project has reported a documented increase of 4,000% in video surveillance over the past 6 years. We are all being watched.

The new production is slated to premiere in late April 2005, with auditions in December and rehearsals beginning in January. For more information about the show as it develops, please visit www.synaesthetic-theatre.com/trial 

Synaesthetic's 2003 - 04 Season Ends with a Bang



Board Chair Jessica Baker reflects on the past year, which can be summed up with a few words: busy, ambitious, and successful! At the end of the season, Synaesthetic Theatre presented our eighth original production, **ARCANA: Cycle of the Fool**, at The Culture Project @ 45 Bleecker.

Arcana was a huge success, with high box office income and attendance. The production was a culmination of the incredible hard work, commitment, and energy of over 30 talented artists. Inspired by the current landscape of war, **Arcana** was composed of 12 segments, half of which were rearranged at random every evening based on Tarot cards shuffled by the audience. Performance highlights included a 25-minute short film, an original music score, breathtaking and dynamic design concepts, and a final product which was never the same twice.

As the producer, I was thrilled to achieve so many of our goals. Due to the excellent attendance and successful fundraising efforts, we were able to offer the contributing artists modest honorariums for the first time - no small feat with so many collabo-

rators! The Culture Project @ 45 Bleecker was all that we had hoped for, with excellent technical equipment, enabling the designers to achieve even more spectacular results than usual. The theater's staff (most notably David Szlasa and Garin Marschall) was helpful, supportive, and worked incredibly hard to meet our needs.

Administratively, the 03-04 season culminated with the Board of Directors revising the company organizational structure to create an additional level, recognized as Associate Members. This new structure has allowed us to increase the company size, as well as welcome back from hiatus company member James Ford.

After an exciting year, Synaesthetic now looks to the future. In addition to offering more in-depth training workshops to the public (see page 4); we plan to renew last

year's successful Artistic Development programs. During the Seed Idea Development process, company members will collaborate in small groups to explore and document new production concepts for future use. In our now annual in-house workshop, Creating Art Collaboratively, company members and invited artists are afforded an opportunity to experiment with the means and methods for creating physical theatre. Finally, we've begun pre-production work for Synaesthetic's 2005 production, a multimedia adaptation of Franz Kafka's *The Trial*.

We couldn't have achieved all that we did last year without the amazing support of our patrons and donors. We hope to see each of you at a workshop or production in this exciting season to come!! 

Arcane Memoirs

Members of the ensemble - cast, crew, designers & directors - share some of their experiences and reactions to working on **ARCANA: Cycle of the Fool**. The show ran from May 15th - 29th at the Culture Project @ 45 Bleecker, in lower Manhattan.

Michael Makowski (Stage Actor): The week before I was cast in *Arcana* I was going to quit theatre. The fact is this: I've been an actor for ten years now and this was the best show I've ever been in. I am honored to have been a part of such an amazing team of artists who care so much, and work so hard and endlessly for their art.



There was a true kindness, tenacity and inquiry into the nature of creation, and the human dilemma of existence and the end of that existence. As an actor, to work in that environment was a dream come true and I can only hope that it comes again because I want to go deeper.

Clinton Powell (Stage Actor): I was continually amazed at how each combination of the cards could generate a unique quality for each performance. Working on a show with such weight of content was both an extreme challenge and an utter delight.

Chris Nichols (Co-Director): So much of the process was about just being present with the themes we wanted to explore and an ongoing exercise in accepting the direction a given piece might take or the order of a performance on a given night. It was about breathing into the moment and seeing the world from that perspective; remembering the other orders, but also completely giving into the one that was happening right now.

Arwen Lowbridge (Asst. Stage Manager): With our world enduring such tumultuous times, I felt empowered by my experience of *Arcana* - knowing that I contributed to something that promoted peace, understanding and hope in a world set upon by violence, hypocrisy and hatred.



Ted Hannan (Film Actor): *Arcana* was a sumptuous, provocative experience. The reading of the cards opened up for me an urgent need to pay attention to what lies

before us, to somehow address the deepening shadow cast by the bomb. While serious, I loved the humor, and the playful grotesque. The shoot was a cool, if grueling, experience. It was wonderful to be down with the Synaesthetic family.

Joy Leonard (Co-Director): For a couple of control freaks like Chris and myself, including the chance element and allowing for constant transformation was just enormous, both terrifying and liberating. I held my breath every time Margaret drew the cards that would determine the order that night. People who saw *Arcana* kept asking us, "So really, was there an ideal order?" And the answer is still no. There were too many unexpectedly beautiful conjunctions to ever be encompassed in one single performance.



Paula A. Marchiel (Production Coordinator): The challenges of the ever-changing show were energizing. It was fun to keep track of the different orders of the live performance and talk about how each one changed depending on its relationship to the film sequences. I came away from the experience feeling proud to have worked on both the film and stage pieces and proud of everyone I had worked with.

John DesRoches (Film Director): The 6 days of filming *Fool* were like a dream, maybe because we barley slept. It was the most grueling, tense and exciting vacation I ever had. I would do it again tomorrow.

Suchan Vodoor (Editor & Film Actor): It was great to see the film and stage elements finally come together. Often, during editing, we would have to balance what was good for the story of the film with how it fit into the whole show. In the end it was nice to see the effect the two had on each other, especially when reservations I had about a cut disappeared when that same scene was

shown in the context of the show.

Margaret O'Sullivan (Stage Actor): I really enjoyed watching the show every night and thought it was beautiful, thought provoking and very moving. I was excited about the leap we took as a company for trying something so different.



H. Brooke Perkins (Film Actor): It was great to be back working with everyone. Weird being on the other side of things, but awesome all the same. It was a unique experience. *[In addition to playing one in the film, Brooke really is currently an officer of the NYPD. In a previous life she designed lights for Synaesthetic.]*

Tina West Chavous (Stage Actor): Even though at times during the process, I felt ensconced in the turbulence and complications of my own life and life in general, I was able to use those ups and downs to further my work in *Arcana*. Indeed, our lives' complications, our fears and losses and dreams were upon what we built the show.



Bonnie Rose Marcus (Film Actor): excerpted from "Playing Laia"

Late afternoon
Fort Green Park, Brooklyn
clouds streaking cross sky
bare branched trees beckon

COPY THAT

I am between myself and Laia
there is no linear frame
death before memory
dream to the waking light
circular, mysterious, illuminating

Think of a question
hold that question in your mind

IT'S A TAKE

For additional reactions, photographs and information on *Arcana* please visit www.synaesthetic-theatre.com/arcana

Inside Out : Developmental Movement & The Viewpoints Workshop



In May, Synaesthetic produced a 2-day workshop led by Wendell Beavers, which combined his Developmental Movement technique with the Viewpoints. This was a rare opportunity to work with Wendell here in NYC, since he was appointed Director of Performing Arts at Naropa University in 2003 and is now Chair of their new two-year MFA in Theater: Contemporary Performance. Arwen Lowbridge recalls sharing the experience with the 15 other artists who attended.

I was thrilled to participate in Synaesthetic Theatre's **Developmental Movement & the Viewpoints: Joining Sensation to Perception** in May. Combining the two techniques to investigate physically-based theatre facilitated a wonderful, rich exploration into these disciplines. We were blessed with a diverse group of participants with all levels of experience in both forms. This created a supportive and judgment-free environment which resulted in an expansive opportunity to explore the work at hand. Ours was one of the most dedicated and focused groups I have ever had the pleasure of working with in any situation.

I believe the great value of this work is

the act of investigation. My experience in this workshop yielded the questions "What are the difficulties inherent in creating theatre from the inside out and what physical tools does the performer have at their disposal to incorporate into a performance of any kind?" These questions always lead me back to the elusive relationship between form and content and performer and audience - what is being expressed and how it is being communicated. For example, I examine how a gesture or movement resonates to the audience and then compare it to my inner emo-



tional experience of that gesture.

I have been a student of these and other physical techniques for over ten years now, and ironically, the more physical work I participate in, the more mental conundrums I come out with. Of course, I love it because it leads me back to another workshop to continue my examination. I am truly grateful to Synaesthetic for providing the programs which support my personal quest for generating questions rather than cultivating answers.

For additional information on future Synaesthetic workshops, please visit www.theviewpoints.com 

The Art of Teaching

For 2 intense weeks in July, Chris Nichols and Joy Leonard taught a Workshop in Physical Theatre with Stephen Wanhg, author of *An Acrobat of the Heart*, for the Special Programs department at NYU. The class totaled 72 'real' hours, and counted for 2 Masters Level credit hours.



While we've cadged rehearsal space on the good ol' 2nd floor of TISCH (home of ETW) for years now, this was our first return to NYU as official instructors. Steve wanted to create a class for the purpose of teaching teachers - that is, dealing with pedagogy and methods for teaching Physical Acting. Chris and Joy laid down the basics for

Viewpoints work and a little piece-making, and served as demonstrators when needed for the Grotowski-based work that Steve led. Along the way we also soaked up pedagogy ourselves, and enjoyed the immersion in physical acting. It was an extremely challenging and enlightening experience, and it was an honor to work with a group of teaching artists who were

so deeply committed to honing their crafts and expanding their educational tools. For those of you who have read Steve's book, you'll be happy to learn that he has another in the conceptual works already - dealing more directly with pedagogy issues.

Many thanks to Steve for inviting us to take this journey with him! 

Greetings and Farewells

Synaesthetic is pleased to announce that in August 2004 we inducted four new members into our fold. Clinton Powell has joined us as a Producing Company Member and Seth Trucks, Paul Hudson and Suchan Vodoor as Associate Members of Synaesthetic Theatre. Clinton appeared onstage in *ARCANA: Cycle of the Fool* and as Narcissus in *Icon*. Seth choreographed the violence for *Arcana* and

Shadow of the Invisible Man. Paul did astounding things with lights in the last three Synaesthetic productions, and Suchan has collaborated with the company in a variety of capacities, including designing lights, editing video and acting. We are delighted to welcome these four talented individuals, and continue cultivating their valuable skills and energy within our creative processes.

After several years of amazing work with Synaesthetic, Beth Krafchik has left the company to pursue other interests. She appeared in our first six productions -- including starring as the AI in *Tamatebako {the box}* -- and has been a strong force in shaping the ongoing aesthetic of the company. We will miss her, and wish her the very best in all endeavors! 

the viewpoints :: 4 workshops with Synaesthetic Theatre

Saturdays :: 9/18, 10/16, 11/20 and 12/18 [12:30-4:30pm]

Synaesthetic Theatre's fall Viewpoints workshop series, will be held on the 3rd Saturday of September, October November & December. Expanded by popular demand, this new format enables both the teaching artists and participants to delve more deeply into the applications and permutations of this wonderfully versatile improvisation form. Over the last several years, Synaesthetic has served hundreds of artists in the NYC area with one-time introductory workshops, open to both newbies and veteran viewpointers. Consistently, these participants have asked for more, more, more! More opportunities to experiment, more people to play with, more time to explore advanced applications like text, scenes, setting choreography, piece-making and so on. So ... here it is: a workshop package to accommodate beginners as well those who want to dive



into the deep end and go for a satisfying swim.

Originated by dancer/choreographer Mary Overlie, the Viewpoints provide a simple and profound language with which performers, choreographers and directors can communicate. Mary introduced 6 labels or "sign-posts" with which to examine, discuss and deconstruct the process of making art: Space, Time, Shape, Movement, Story and Emotion. Having deconstructed the basic building blocks of physical performance, the performer, choreographer or director is free to examine these separately or in tandem, from all angles, in an infinite investigation. Synaesthetic Theatre utilizes the Viewpoints extensively during our rehearsal process, for ensemble-building, character exploration, and the development of themes, relationships and staging.

09/18/04 :: Introduction to the Viewpoints
Learn or re-visit the basic 6 Viewpoints

10/16/04 :: Adding Sound to the Viewpoints
Viewpointing with music, voice and words

11/20/04 :: Viewpoints & Composition*
Using the Viewpoints in choreography and piece-making

12/18/04 :: Viewpoints in Rehearsal*
Using the Viewpoints to explore themes, relationships and staging

Tuition: Workshop Package - \$80.
(Single Session tuition - \$25)

Location: Cap 21 :: Studio 6
18 West 18th St., 6th Floor

To reserve call 212.696.6721 or email
workshops@theviewpoints.com.

Space is limited & reservations required.

*ADVANCED. Intro workshop or previous experience required.

www.theviewpoints.com

Support Synaesthetic



Want to help us continue to offer affordable workshops and original productions that are challenging and spectacular? You can!

Synaesthetic Theatre is a non-profit organization dedicated to creating

new multimedia theatre with a social conscience, and supporting artists in their

efforts to collaborate across the perceived boundaries of media and methodology. Any contribution that you choose to make, whether financial or "in-kind," will be tax-deductible. In-kind donations include goods and services such as theatrical, film or sound equipment; raffle prizes for our benefits; printing; fabric; legal assistance ... you name it, and we can probably use it.

To make a contribution of any kind, or to inquire about what we need, please don't hesitate to contact us at: (212) 696-6721.

YES, I'd like to make a contribution of: \$ _____

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syn-aes-thet-ic, adj. characterizes a work of art which produces harmony out of different or opposing impulses.